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Enabled Enterprises provides business opportunities for veterans



Enabled Enterprises is an upstart business venture aimed at putting veterans into the business field after they return from service. One of its founders is the late Casey Owens, a U.S. Marine vet who lost both of his legs in Iraq.

On Christmas Eve 2004, part-time Snowmass Village resident Larry Spatz was enjoying another ski vacation with his family. But what normally was a relaxing time for Spatz turned into an epiphany of sorts.

His attention that night was trained on a television program about children who had lost their parents in military combat.

“And of course, it was heartbreaking,” Spatz recalled.

Spatz could have gone to bed and slept on it. He didn’t. Instead, the Chicago businessman began to etch down his vision for the Children of Heroes Foundation, which would create T-shirts, hats and other patriotic-themed items. Proceeds from their sales would benefit families of military men and women killed in action.

That was just the beginning of a mission for Spatz that includes the creation of a new business venture, Enabled Enterprises.

Spatz, who was drafted in 1966 but didn’t serve because he was injured, said he has kept a soft spot for veterans. He remembers when servicemen returned to the States from Vietnam, only to be spat on by protesters of the war.

“Although I wasn’t for the war, these guys were doing their jobs and serving their country,” he said.

With Enabled Enterprises, Spatz is hoping veterans who return home will experience opportunities to succeed in the business field. His mission is at odds with a troubling trend.

Citing findings from the Kauffman Foundation, Spatz said that after World War II, 49 percent of veterans started their own businesses.

In the post-Sept. 11 era, only 6 percent of veterans launched their own businesses.

“My goal is to put 5,000 veterans in their own business in the next year,” Spatz said.

Through Enabled Enterprises, the vets can sell products they can relate to — some products are mobility devices such as the Freedom Trax wheelchairs, which are capable of maneuvering through snow and sand;

supplements that help veterans deal with post-service stress; and wheelchair-accessible shuttles that are solar-powered.

Nanotechnology also is a product vets can sell, including the coating and sealings that already have been used by the Aspen government, Aspen Skiing Co. and Aspen Brewery.

Aspen resident Andy Wooten, a life coach and U.S. Air Force veteran, called Aspen a “proving ground” for the nanotechnology coatings, which have been applied to the buckets on the Silver Queen Gondola at Aspen Mountain, the city’s outdoor trash receptacles downtown and the main brewing tank at Aspen Brewery, among others.

The sealants prevent corrosion and deterioration and can instantly wipe out graffiti on surfaces.

Wooten said he learned about Enabled Enterprises when he met Adam McCabe, who was working with Basalt resident Paul Andersen, also an Aspen Times columnist, on Andersen’s [Huts for Vets](#) project.

McCabe, now an Arizona resident and Marine veteran, had been deeply entrenched in veterans affairs in the Roaring Fork Valley.

It was McCabe, Spatz and Casey Owens, an Aspen resident who died in 2014, who founded Enabled Enterprises.

“I would find them products that nobody else had,” Spatz said. “There were exclusive products that they could sell based on their issues. That was the start of it.”

Owens, a veteran of the Iraq war whose legs were amputated after his Humvee struck a land mine in Baghdad on Sept. 20, 2004, took his own life in October 2014. He was 32. Spatz said the memory of Owens is a driving force behind the project.

“We dedicate Enabled Enterprises to his memory,” the organization’s website states. “Our efforts to create employment, business opportunities, jobs and medical and emotional support for our veterans will continue in Casey’s honor.”